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Washington, DC – Earlier today, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) delivered the following statement on the floor of the House of Representatives, regarding federal spending on programs to protect the environment and invest in Indian Country.

"Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Interior – Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, I have great respect for Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Moran and the staffers on both sides of the aisle. On one important aspect of this bill -- Chairman Simpson and Representative Cole have worked together with Democrats to protect critical education and health care investments in Indian Country as part of our trust relationship with the 565 tribes in this country.

"Native American children, families and elders will all benefit as a result of our efforts. However, on virtually every other aspect of this bill, particularly on the environment, this appropriations bill is a radical attempt to take America backwards from 40 years of bipartisan progress on protecting human health and our environment.

"There are nearly 40 special interest policy riders in this bill. It is outrageous that these riders protect corporate polluters while attacking clean water, clean air, our public lands, and wildlife conservation. Representatives Waxman, Markey, and Rush, as ranking members on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and House Natural Resources Committee, have sent letters expressing their grave concern about these extreme, destructive policy riders that have no business being in an appropriations spending bill.

"This abuse of the legislative process to further Republicans' radical agenda on behalf of polluters and special interests should not be tolerated. These policy riders put the public health of Americans at risk and will imperil America's natural heritage for future generations. In particular, Republicans have chosen to mount an unprecedented assault on the Environmental Protection Agency, an agency created by President Richard Nixon.

"Clearly, Republicans have now come full circle and this bill makes House Republicans the

most polluter-friendly Congress in two generations.

"In addition to gutting the EPA budget, Republicans have added 10 policy riders that will make the air we breathe dirtier and 8 policy riders that will make the water we drink more polluted and toxic. The Republican riders halt EPA's work under the Clean Air Act to protect the public from the impacts of carbon dioxide pollution, mercury emissions, sulfur dioxide, soot and smog.

"This will jeopardize the health of millions of children suffering from asthma and place more Americans at risk for strokes, heart disease, and other respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

"In 2010, the EPA found the Clean Air Act saved 160,000 lives nationwide. That's equivalent to the entire population of Tempe, Arizona. By 2020, that number is expected to grow to 230,000 lives saved, leading to \$2 trillion in economic benefits.

"Republican riders also stop EPA's work under the Clean Water Act to clean up our rivers, streams, lakes and protect our drinking water from the impacts of coal mining, stormwater discharge, toxic nutrient pollution and pesticides. Essentially, House Republicans are telling the American people that protecting the public health and environment from corporate polluters is no longer important.

"Despite the Tea Party Republicans supposed ban on earmarks, this bill is loaded with earmarks for a few privileged polluters and special interests.

"Here are just four out of the dozens of Republican earmarks contained in this bill:

- An earmark for foreign companies to allow for uranium mining adjacent to the Grand Canyon, one of America's most treasured places;
- An earmark for Shell Oil to ignore environmental regulations to drill offshore for oil in the Arctic Ocean;

- An earmark for a few sheep farmers subsidized by U.S. taxpayers on U.S. lands so they can evade environmental laws that protect BigHorn Sheep;
- A special earmark for the State of Texas to continue its illegal air permitting program in violation of the Clean Air Act.

"These dirty, toxic and dangerous earmarks to a few special interests come at the expense of cleaner water, healthier air, our cherished national parks and endangered wildlife. Minnesotans are deeply troubled by this reckless bill that endangers the health of our communities while destroying our natural resources that are our children's inheritance. This is one of the most extreme pieces of anti-environmental legislation to ever come to the floor of the House.

"As far as the American people are concerned, H.R. 2584 should be declared a toxic Superfund site that is so dangerous to human health and environment that it should be remediated rather than passed into law. I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill and its abandonment of 40 years of progress we have made in protecting the American people's health and America's natural heritage."

Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.

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